

CC#14

GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
SAN JUAN

ADDRESS ALL OFFICIAL
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
SAN JUAN, P. R.

February 8, 1943

Circular Letter No. 142

To : All Supervisory Officials and Teachers of
the Public and Accredited Private Schools

Re : COORDINATION OF A HEALTH PROGRAM TO BE
CARRIED OUT IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
SCHOOLS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Circular Letter No. 57 of this year's series states that special programs for the prevention and control of preventable diseases should be sponsored by the schools with the cooperation of the Department of Health and local health units.

It is safe to say that the schools in Puerto Rico are doing their best to instill in the minds of the children and parents the happiness that a healthy and sound body will bring to them. Of course, there are many shortcomings in the health program of the schools, and, at times, the inadequacy of the service is apparent.

There is need for a more systematic and unified health program in the schools. This can be developed by bringing together health teachers, home economics teachers, visiting teachers, physical education teachers, the Junior Red Cross personnel, the doctors, nurses, social workers of the Health Department, and the lunch-room personnel to work in closer relationship with each other. The Department of Education and the Department of Health are working toward this aim in a most helpful and cordial way.

The Department of Health will heartily cooperate in the provision of health services to school children. Several meetings have been held so far between the personnel of this Department and members of the Bureau of

Maternal and Infant-Hygiene of the Department of Health. It was decided by the Joint Committee on Health that the following medical services will be offered by the medical staff of the Department of Health:

1. Medical examination of all first graders to start right away and to continue throughout the summer vacation. The children who enroll in the first grade for the school year 1943-44 will also be examined. The Department of Health will use their own examination forms, so as to systematize their work.

During the summer vacation the superintendents of schools will assign the necessary teachers to contact the parents of the children to be enrolled and see to it that the children are examined.

Concerning the medical examination for first graders, kindly see Circular Letter No. 110 of December 10, 1942.

2. Dental service

There are several dental clinics, both municipal and insular, that are taking care of this type of service for the school children who need it the most. It has been found that quite a number of the dentists assigned to work part time in the schools are only pulling out teeth, some of which could be saved by filling them. The superintendent of schools should urge the school director and other municipal authorities to appropriate enough funds to buy the necessary equipment and supplies, so that the dentist in charge will be able to improve the work. It is further suggested that the superintendents of schools, principals, and teachers work in harmony with the dentist and send the children to the clinic on the day and hour scheduled.

3. Care and treatment of eye troubles

We recommend that all eye troubles be referred to the Junior Red Cross for correction.

4. Health conferences

During the year several important health conferences will be given in the schools by members of the medical staff of the Department of Health. We urgently recommend that teachers attend these conferences, as there is no doubt that they will help to enrich their experiences and to give them a better understanding of the health problems of Puerto Rico. The last half-hour of any school day may be used for these conferences.

The effectiveness of this program depends largely upon the quality of the administrative and teaching personnel. It must be clearly recognized that the school, the home, and the community have cooperative and continuing responsibilities for the health of the pupils. We expect the full and complete cooperation of the supervisory and teaching force of the schools with the Department of Health.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) JOSÉ H. GALLARDO
Commissioner of Education